AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-20. (cancelled)

21. (currently amended) A feeder element for use in metal casting, said feeder element having a first end for mounting on a mould pattern, an opposite second end for receiving a feeder sleeve and a bore between the first and second ends defined by a sidewall, said feeder element being compressible in use whereby to reduce the distance between said first and second ends, wherein an initial crush strength is no more than 5000 N, and wherein the compression is non-reversible.

22. (canceled)

23. (previously presented) A feeder element as claimed in claim 21, wherein the initial crush strength is at least 500 N.

24. (canceled)

25. (previously presented) A feeder element as claimed in claim 21, wherein compression is achieved through the deformation of a non-brittle material.

26. (previously presented) A feeder element as claimed in claim 21, wherein the feeder element has a stepped sidewall which comprises a first series of sidewall regions in the form of rings of increasing diameter interconnected and integrally formed with a second series of sidewall regions.

27. (currently amended) A feeder element as claimed in claim ~~21~~ 26, wherein said rings are circular.

28. (previously presented) A feeder element as claimed in claim 26, wherein said rings are planar.

29. (previously presented) A feeder element as claimed in claim 26, wherein the sidewall regions are of substantially uniform thickness, so that the diameter of the bore of the feeder element increases from the first end to the second end of the feeder element.

30. (currently amended) A feeder element as claimed in claim 26, wherein the second series of sidewall regions are ~~annular~~ parallel to the bore axis.

31. (previously presented) A feeder element as claimed in claim 26, wherein the angle defined between the bore axis and the first sidewall regions is from about 55 to 90°.

32. (previously presented) A feeder element as claimed in claim 26, wherein the sidewall region defining the first end of the feeder element is inclined to the bore axis by an angle of 5 to 30°.

33. (previously presented) A feeder element as claimed in claim 26, wherein the thickness of the sidewall regions is from about 4 to 24% of the distance between the inner and outer diameters of the first sidewall regions.

34. (currently amended) A feeder element as claimed in claim 33, wherein a free edge of the sidewall region defining the first end of the feeder element has an inwardly directed annular flange ~~or bead~~.

35. (previously presented) A feeder element as claimed in claim 21, wherein the sidewall of the feeder element is provided with one or more weak points which are designed to deform or shear in use under a predetermined load.

36. (previously presented) A feeder element as claimed in claim 35, wherein the sidewall is provided with at least one region of reduced thickness which deforms under a predetermined load.

37. (currently amended) A feeder element as claimed in clam 35, wherein the sidewall is provided with one or more kinks, bends, or corrugations ~~or other contours~~ which cause the sidewall to deform under a predetermined load.

38. (previously presented) A feeder element as claimed in claim 35, wherein the bore is frustoconical and bounded by a sidewall having at least one circumferential groove.

39. (previously presented) A feeder system for metal casting comprising a feeder element in accordance with claim 21 and a feeder sleeve secured thereto.

40. (previously presented) A feeder system in accordance with claim 39, in which the feeder sleeve is secured to the feeder element by adhesive or by being a push fit with the feeder element or by moulding the sleeve around part of the feeder element.

41. (new) A feeder element as claimed in claim 21 wherein the feeder element is made from a metal selected from steel, aluminum, aluminum alloys and brass.

42. (new) A feeder element as claimed in claim 21 wherein the feeder element is made from steel.

43. (new) A feeder element as claimed in claim 21 wherein the crush strength is at least 500 N and no more than 3000 N.

44 (new). A feeder as claimed in claim 26 wherein the thickness of the sidewall regions is 0.4 to 1.5 mm.